

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 L-03 DHA-02 H-02 /017 W

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R 061644Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0373

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MX

SUBJECT: SPECIAL VISIT TO LECUMBERRI PRISON

1. ON SEPTEMBER 29, CONOFF RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM ALICE LEVEEN, A FRIEND OF SEVERAL OF THE PRISONERS. LEVEEN SAID THAT FOUR PRISONERS, DAVID MARTINEZ, TIMOTHY KOSCHNEY, CHARLES BEASLEY, AND GEORGE KENNETH FARRELL, WERE BEING MOVED FROM DORMITORY "F" FOR "NO REASON," AND WOULD HAVE TO BUY CELLS AND PAY TO BE RELEASED FROM THE FAENA DUTY IN THEIR NEW DORMS. THEY WANTED AN IMMEDIATE VISIT FROM THE EMBASSY.

2. CONOFF IMMEDIATELY WENT TO LECUMBERRI AND SPOKE WITH THE MEN, WHO SAID THEY WERE TOLD THE GENERAL HAD MOVED THEM FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS. MARTINEZ WAS HAPPY WITH THE CHANGE, BUT OTHERS ASKED CONOFF TO INTERCEDE ON THEIR BEHALF, TO EITHER HAVE THEM RETURNED TO "F" OR TRANSFERRED TO DIFFERENT DORMS FROM THE ONES TO WHICH THEY HAD BEEN TAKEN.

3. CONOFF DISCUSSED MATTER WITH LT. COL. GIL, WHO SHOWED CONOFF WRITTEN REQUEST FROM MAYOR OF "F" TO GENERAL ARCAUTE, ASKING THAT THE FOUR MEN BE REMOVED FROM "F" BECAUSE THEY WERE "UNDISCIPLINED." (INDISCIPLINADOS) CONOFF ASKED WHAT THEIR INDISCIPLINE CONSISTED OF AND ASKED WHY COLONEL ACCEPTED THE WORD OF A PRISONER WHO, UNDER THE MEXICAN PENAL CODE, HAD NO RIGHT OF AUTHORITY OVER OTHER PRISONERS. COLONEL REPLIED THAT WITHOUT MAYOR SYSTEM THE PRISON WOULD BE CHAOS, AND HE IS OBLIGED TO

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ACCEPT THE WORLD OF THE RESPONSIBLE PRISONER HE HAD APPOINTED

AS MAYOR, OR THE MAYOR WOULD HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THOSE IN HIS CHARGE. COLONEL GRINNED BROADLY AT CONOFF'S MENTION OF ILLEGALITY OF MAYOR SYSTEM.

4. CONOFF THEN POINTED OUT INJUSTICE OF HAVING TO PAY AGAIN FOR CELLS AND REMOVAL FROM WORK DETAIL. COLONEL SAID IT WAS A PRISON RULE THAT MEN WHO ARE TRANSFERRED FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS MUST DO FAENAS IN NEW DORMS. HE DENIED THAT ANYONE IN PRISON PAID FOR A CELL. COLONEL THEN OFFERED TO RETURN MEN TO "F" IF CONOFF INSISTED, BUT SAID HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THEY WOULD NOT THEN BE BEATEN BY OTHER PRISONERS IN "F", AS UNDISCIPLINE BY A FEW PEOPLE UPSETS THE ENTIRE DORM. CONOFF REFUSED TO BE CAUGHT IN SAME TRAP USED BY COLONEL IN RENNA-BEASLEY INCIDENT (MEXICO), AND SAID THE EMBASSY WOULD NOT INSIST ON THE MEN'S RETURN TO "F". HOWEVER, CONOFF PROPOSED THAT COLONEL TRANSFER THE MEN TO THE DORMS THEY WERE REQUESTING. COLONEL REFUSED TO TRANSFER FARRELL TO "O", AS HE SAID THE MORE AMERICANS IN ONE DORM, THE MORE PROBLEMS HE HAD, BUT AGREED, "ONLY BECAUSE YOU (CONOFF) ARE ASKING FOR IT," THAT BEASLEY WOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO "B" AND KOSCHNEY TO "G". CONOFF THEN EXPLAINED SITUATION TO MEN, WHO WERE GRATEFUL FOR EMBASSY INTERVENTION.

5. TACTIC USED BY CONOFF IN DISCUSSION WITH COLONEL WAS ONE OF, "YOU AND I BOTH KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE, SO WHY LIE ABOUT IT." FRANKLY, IT WAS LIKE TALKING TO A BRICK WALL. COLONEL, UNFORTUNATELY, SHOWS NO SIGNS OF ANY MELLOWING IN HIS MANAGEMENT OF THE PRISON AND GAVE CONOFF USUAL TIRADE ABOUT HE ALONE BEING IN CHARGE OF INTERNAL PRISON ADMINISTRATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRISONERS WELFARE, PENAL INSTITUTIONS, CONSULAR LEGAL ASSISTANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MEXICO08746
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750346-0699
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751079/aaaacsgc.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SCS
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 SEP 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <20 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPECIAL VISIT TO LECUMBERRI PRISON
TAGS: CASC, PINS, MX, US, (MARTINEZ, DAVID), (KOSCHNEY, TIMOTHY), (BEASLEY, CHARLES), (FARRELL, GEORGE KENNETH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006